

Enigma in paraphrasing Ayurvedic *Grantha*

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Abstract

Three different axioms of Sushruta Samhita-*Sharira Sthana* were analyzed and its translations by respectable translators were studied. The different Sanskrit terms were also analyzed using Monier-Williams and Apte Sanskrit dictionaries as a part of intercomparison study. The Sanskrit terms used in Ayurveda are those which seem to be commonly used, but their meanings are not the same as commonly understood or known. The article is an attempt to understand this ancient wisdom from Sushruta Samhita so as to highlight the peculiarities of Ayurvedic concepts and remove the bigotry regarding the use of common Sanskrit terms for explaining *Rachana Sharira* (anatomy) this will further help for the correct translation of Samhita. Axioms 4-22, 4-31 and 5-28 of Sushruta Samhita-*Sharira Sthana* are clinically important, because the clinical acumen is based on the correct knowledge of the human body.

Keywords: Ayurveda, joints, lungs, semen, *Sharira Sthana*, Sushruta Samhita

Introduction

Translations have been of great help in this modern age where English has dominated all the other languages. Indians had to struggle hard for the revival and renewal of interest in Sanskrit language, especially among the current generation of Ayurveda students. Due to the availability of various translations, only today's world can acknowledge various secrets revealed in Ayurveda. In the present educational system, the undergraduate (UG) students of Ayurveda generally read the translation of *Samhita* for their studies. The same is the case with the scientific community who is exploring ancient wisdom for their research leads. The authors observed some enigmas in paraphrasing Ayurvedic *Grantha*. In this article, some such examples from Sushruta Samhita-*Sharira Sthana* are discussed and elaborated.

Research question and Hypothesis

Will referring to meanings of the ambiguous Sanskrit terms from various dictionaries be helpful in developing faith in Ayurvedic *Grantha's* (Sushruta Samhita-*Sharira Sthana*) authenticity?

If an Ayurveda scholar refers to various Sanskrit dictionaries to understand the meanings of critical Sanskrit terms from the beginning, he/she develops doubtless understanding of axioms

in Sushruta Samhita-*Sharira Sthana*, thereby increasing faith in it.

Aims and objective

1. To clear the ambiguity of citations 4-22, 4-31 and 5-28 of Sushruta Samhita-*Sharira Sthana*
2. To develop a level of confidence in the reality of the axioms 4-22, 4-31 and 5-28 of Sushruta Samhita-*Sharira Sthana*.

Materials and Methods

Here, literacy source method is used for collecting historical data from secondary sources.

The citations in Sushruta Samhita-*Sharira Sthana* are the basic study material and source, in order to establish facts and reach actual conclusion. To accentuate hypothesis of the present study, a few interpretations—translations made by respectable scholarly people like Kaviraj Kunjalal Bhishagratna, Prof. K. R. Srikanthmurthy, Shree Ambika Dutta Sashtri, ShreeAtridevi, Dr. B. G. Ghanekar, Vd. Jadavji Trikamji Acharya,

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Prof. P. V. Sharma, Dr. Anantram Sharma, Prof. D. G. Thatte on Sushruta Samhita-*Sharira Sthana* have been reviewed. For understanding the meanings of Sanskrit terms, different Sanskrit-English dictionaries of eminent lexicographers like Monier-Williams and V. S. Apte were taken into consideration. Moreover, to keep updated with contemporary sciences, appropriate information was obtained from the Textbook of Embryology by Dr. Inderbir Singh.

The authors searched through secondary sources and documented the available information. While documenting information from the available sources as used in historical research method, a positive internal criticism under the heading discussion is applied to establish validity and reliability of the data. Using it, the accuracy of the information contained is evaluated.

On reading and interpreting axioms in Sushruta Samhita-*Sharira Sthana*, apparent contradictions were observed. Our faith in Acharya Sushruta should dispel clouds of doubt and difficulties in understanding the subject, but opposite seemed to happen. Then, it was felt that reading the paraphrasing must have been the real cause of uncertainty and obstruction to grasp the meaning. It seems to be causing problems in understanding what Acharya Sushruta was trying to explain. A quest to know the fact became stronger. It made us to fathom deep into the meaning of different words which were hitherto considered to be very simple. In this process, various Sanskrit-English dictionaries of eminent lexicographers like Monier-Williams and V. S. Apte were taken into consideration. A new perspective was adopted to view at the Sanskrit words. It proved to be very encouraging. What Acharya Sushruta was trying to convey became more clear and obvious.

Observation

Here, only few citations are observed along with their translations. However, an intense study is done to dispel the doubts.

On citation: 1

*Dvayangule Dakshine Parshve Bastidvarasya Capyadhah |
Mutrasrotahpathacchukram Purushasya Pravartate*||

– (Sushruta Samhita-*Sharira Sthana*, 4/22).

Meaning:

1. The semen passes through the ducts situated about two fingers breadth on either side (vas deference) and just below the neck of the bladder and finally flows out through the canal^[1]
2. *Shukra* (semen) comes out through the urinary passage of man from a distance of two *Angula* (4 cm approx.) beneath the orifice of the urinary bladder on the right side^[2]
3. Two fingers below the urinary bladder on the *Dakshina* (right) side (according to one of the opinion – left) from the urinary passage *Shukra* of male's flow. Comments: In males, urinary and seminal passages are same. There are no different passages; on either side of the bladder, there are two *Shukrakshaya* (seminal vesicles) through which *Shukra* flows into the penis (urethral canal)^[3]

4. Two fingers below the urinary orifice on *Dakshina Parshva* from the urinary passage, only *Shukra* flows in males. Comments: *Dakshina Parshva*: here, we must deduce two fingers on *Dakshina* (right) and *Vama* (left) to arrive at the acceptable meaning of the original axiom; otherwise, it seems to be opposing the perception (*Pratyaksha*) – a valid source of knowledge (commentary in *Pratyaksha Sharira*)^[4]
5. Two fingers below the orifice of *Basti* (bladder) on *Dakshina* and *Vama Parshva* (accumulated in *Shukradharakala*), *Shukra* of male comes (out) through the urinary passage^[5]
6. Here to achieve the desired meaning of the axiom, we should read *Dvayangule Dakshine Vame*; otherwise, it seems to be opposing the perception (*Pratyaksha*) and Sushruta own saying, *Shukravahe Dve Shukrapradurbhavaya Dve Visargaya Cha' Iti Sushrute Eva Pratyakshasharira Upoddhata*^[6]
7. Semen is discharged through the urethra having reached there from two fingers on the right side below the opening of the bladder. Gananatha Sen (*Pratyakshasharira Upoddhata* page 72) has proposed the variant “*Vame*” in the place of “*Parshve*” as there are two ducts carrying semen on both sides^[7]
8. Beneath the orifice of the urinary bladder (internal urinary meatus) and two fingers on the right side, *Shukra* of male enters the urinary passage to come out.^[8]

In this *Shloka* of *Sushruta Samhita-Sharira Sthana* 4/22, the critical words are “*Dakshina Parshva*,” contemplating over these two words, we adduce to the meaning in the following manner:

There are different meanings of *Dakshina*^[9] such as:

- a. From the right or from the south
- b. On the right side or from southward
- c. Declined as a pronoun when denoting relative position
- d. Opposite of north side – *Uttara* is upper and opposite of that is *Dakshina* – lower.

There are different meanings of *Parshva*^[10] such as:

- Side or nearness or proximity.

On citation: 2:

Let us continue the discussion on the aforesaid topic; this time, we would observe the translations of few respectable scholarly people on the following *Sutra* of Sushruta Samhita *Sharira Sthana*:

*Rakta Medahprasadaadvrakau Mamsasrkka
Kaphamedhprasadaadvrshana
Shonita Kaphaprasadajam Hridayam Yadashraya Hi
Dhamanyah Pranavahah
Tasyadho Vamataha Pleeha Phupphusascha Dakshinto
YaktraKloma Cha
Tadvisesena Chetanasthanam Atastasmims Tamasa Vrate
Sarvapratinah Svapanti*||

– (Sushruta Samhita, *Sharira Sthana* 4-31).

Meaning:

1. From the essence of *Rakta* and *Medas*, the two *Vrikka* (kidney) are formed and the two *Vrishanna* are formed from the essence of *Mamsa*, *Asrika*, *Kapha* and *Meda*. *Hridaya* (heart) and the *Pranavaha Dhamani* attached to it are produced by the essence of *Shonita* (Blood) and *Kapha*. Below it (the heart) to the left are situated *Pleeha* and *Phupphusa* (left lung) and to the right are situated *Yakrita* and *Kloma*. It (heart) is the seat of *Chetana* especially because of this when it is covered/enveloped with *Tamas*, all living beings sleep^[11]
2. The kidneys (*Vrikka*) are made out of the essence of the blood and fat. The testes are formed out of the essence of blood, flesh, *Kapha* and fat. The heart is formed out of the essence of blood and *Kapha* and the vessels (*Dhamani*) carrying the vital principles of the body are attached to it (heart). The spleen and the lungs are situated below and beneath the heart on the left side, and the liver and *Kloma* below and beneath it (heart) on the right. The heart is the special seat of consciousness (*Chetana*) in all creatures. Sleep sets in when this viscus (heart) of a person becomes enveloped by the effect of the *Tamas*^[12]
3. The *Vrikka* (kidneys) are formed from the essence of *Rakta* and *Meda*. *Vrishana* are formed from the *Prasada* (essence) part of the *Mamsa*, *Rakta*, *Kapha* and *Meda*. The *Hridaya* is made out of the essence of *Rakta* and *Kapha*. The *Dhamani* (vessels) carrying *Prana* of the body are attached to *Hridaya*. The *Pleeha* and the *Phupphusa* are situated below and beneath the *Hridaya* on the left side and *Yakrita* (liver) and *Kloma* below and beneath *Hridaya* on the right side. The *Hridaya* has been especially described as the seat of *Chetana* (consciousness) in all human beings. When *Hridaya* (heart) becomes enveloped by the effects of *Tama*, all creatures sleep^[13]
4. *Vrikka* develops from the essence of *Rudhira* and *Meda* and *Vrishana* from essence *Mamsa*, *Rakta*, *Kapha* and *Meda*. *Hridaya* develops from the essence of *Rakta* and *Kapha*. This *Hridaya* only provides the base to *Pranavaha Dhamani* and below the heart on the left side, *Pleeha* and *Phupphusa* and on the right side, *Yakrita* and *Kloma*, are situated. That *Hridaya* is especially the seat of *Chetana*. When it gets covered by *Tamoguna*, all creatures fall asleep^[14]
5. *Vrikka* develops from the essence of *Rakta* and *Meda*. And, *Vrishana* develops from *Mamsa*, *Rakta*, *Kapha* and *Meda*. From the essence of *Rakta* and *Kapha* develops *Hridaya*. It provides base to *Pranavaha Dhamani*. Below it on the left side lies *Pleeha* and *Phupphusa*. On the right side lies *Yakrita* and *Kloma*. *Hridaya* is a special *Chetana-Sthana*. Therefore, when it is enveloped by *Tamas*, all creatures sleep^[15]
6. 'Kloma cha' this reference in *Sushruta* shows their ignorance—below heart on *Vamatah Pleeha* on *Dakshinatah Yakrita*, on both sides *Kloma* and *Phupphusa*; this should be the verse; otherwise, by no means, we could arrive at a consensus (*Pratyaksha Sharira Upoddhata, Pristha*, Pg. 79)^[16]
7. *Vrikka* develops from the essence of *Rakta* and *Meda*. From the essence of *Mamsa*, *Rakta*, *Kapha* and *Meda* *Vrishana* develops and from the essence of *Rakta* and *Kapha* develops *Hridaya* because this *Hridaya* provides base to *Pranavaha Dhamani*. Below this, *Hridaya* on *Vama Parshva*, *Pleeha* and *Phupphusa* and on *Dakshina Parshva*, *Yakrita* and *Kloma* are placed. This *Hridaya* is a special place for *Chetana*; therefore, when heart is enveloped by *Tama*, all creatures sleep^[17]
8. From the essence of *Rakta* and *Meda*, *Vrikka* develops; from *Mamsa*, *Rakta*, *Kapha* and *Meda*, *Vrishana* develops; from the essence of *Rakta* and *Kapha*, *Hridaya* develops; on its base are *Pranavaha Dhamani*, below *Hridaya* on the left side, *Pleeha* and *Phupphusa* (below) and on the right side, *Yakrita*, *Kloma* (and *Phupphusa*) are present. This *Hridaya* is especially *Chetanya Sthana*. Therefore, on getting enveloped by *Tama*, all creatures fall asleep^[18]
9. Two *Vrikka* (kidneys) are formed by the essence of blood and fat; *Vrishana* (testicles) are formed by the essence of muscle, blood, *Kapha* and fat; *Hridaya* (heart) originates from the essence of blood and *Kapha* which supports the *Prana* carrying vessels; below this on the left side are spleen and lungs, whereas on the right side are liver and gall bladder. Heart is particularly the seat of consciousness and as such when it is overshadowed by *Tama*, all persons sleep.^[19]

Now, in this aforesaid citation 2 of *Sushruta Samhita-Sharira Sthana 4/31*, the keywords are *Vamatah* and *Daksinato*. As said earlier on contemplating and on referring to lexicographer *Monier-Williams*, *Dakshine* is^[20]

- South, southern directed, southward, coming from south *Vama* (3)^[21]
- Reverse, adverse, contrary, opposite, acting in the opposite way or different oblique.

On citation: 3

Let us consider one more example to observe the difficulties and ways to tackle them while learning Ayurvedic Samhitas. The present example is as follows:

*Asthnam Tu Sandhayo HyeteKevalah Parikirtitah I
Pesisnayusiranam Tu Sandhisankhya Na Vidyate II*

(*Sushruta Samhita-Sharira Sthana 5/28*).

Meaning:

1. Here, only the joints of bones are described; the joints of muscles, ligaments and blood vessels are innumerable^[22]
2. Only the bone and joints have been enumerated and described; the joints of muscles, ligaments and veins are innumerable^[23]
3. Points so far described are of bones only; joints of *Peshi* (muscles), *Snayu* (ligaments), *Sira* (veins) are innumerable^[24]
4. This is the description of bony joints only. Joints of *Peshi*, *Snayu* and *Sira* are innumerable^[25]
5. These joints discussed here are the joints between the bones. Joints between *Mamsapeshi* (muscles), *Snayu*

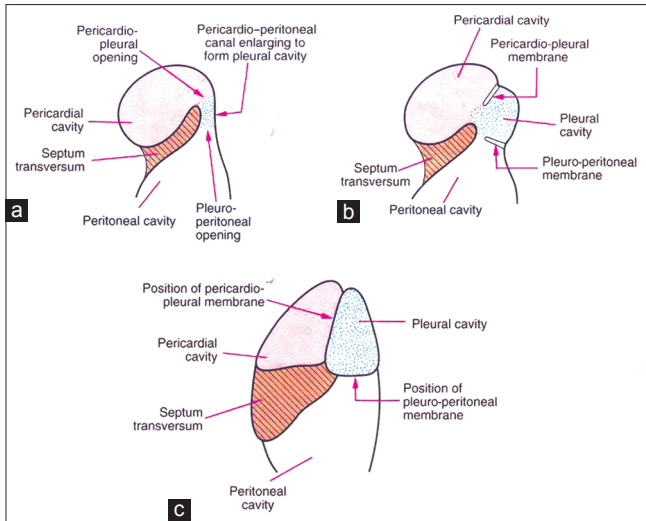


Figure 1: Formation of pleural cavity and its separation from pericardial and peritoneal cavities. (a) Pericardio-peritoneal canal enlarges to form the pleural cavity. The pleural cavity communicates freely with the pericardial and peritoneal cavities. (b) Gradual formation of pericardio-pleural and pleuro-peritoneal membranes and widening of the three cavities. (c) The pleural cavity is completely separated from the pericardial and peritoneal cavities by the formation of pericardio-pleural and pleuro-peritoneal membranes

(ligaments) and *Sira* (vessels) are innumerable^[26]

- The joints mentioned here are in bones only^[27]
- These are the joints between the bones only. Joints of *Peshi*, *Snayu* and *Sira* are not counted^[28]
- This (the above mentioned) description is about the joints between bones only. Joints of *Peshi*, *Snayu* and *Sira* could not be enumerated.^[29]

On referring to a few Sanskrit–English dictionaries by Monier-Williams and V. S. Apte while keeping the basic knowledge of Sanskrit intact, we deduce the meaning of various words in the citation 3 as follows:

Asthanam (of bones), *tu*^[30] (now, them, certainly), *Sandhiyom* (joints), *Hi*^[31] (surely, indeed, definitely, without any doubt), *Etad*^[32] (this, here, in this manner, thus, so, at now), *Kevalah*^[33] (exclusively, only, unique), *Pari*^[34] (much, more than, very much), *Kirtita*^[35] (known, praised, told,), *Kirti*^[35] (renowned, famous), *Kirtita*^[36] (mentioned, said, mentioned, asserted, celebrated, known).

Results

For citation 1:

The meanings of the words “*Dakshine Parshve*” may be considered as lower and proximal instead of right side or either side.

These interpretations on the critical words in Sushruta Samhita *Sharira Sthana* 4/22 make the citation quite meaningful without raising doubts; moreover, it is also consistent with the present-day anatomy. Finally, we can put the translation of Sushruta Samhita *Sharira Sthana* 4/22 as,

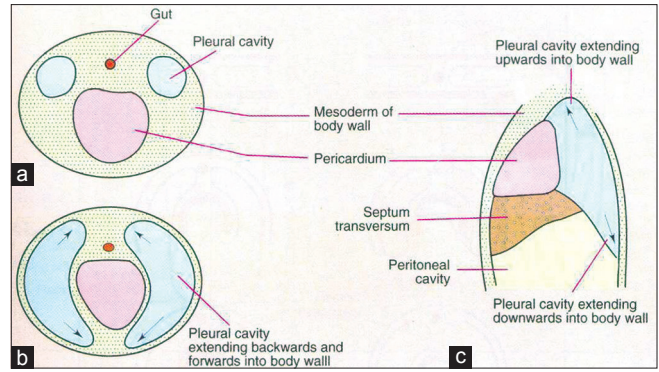


Figure 2: Schemes to show (a-c) how pleural cavity expands into the body wall

“The *Shukra* flows down through (the openings in) urinary passage, (situated) two fingers lower (*Dakshine*) and near (*Parshve*) to the orifice of the bladder.”

For citation 2:

Considering all the translation and various meanings we can deduce that, the meaning of word “*Dakshinato*” should be considered as southward or lower, downward or below and of “*Vamatah*” as opposite direction or reverse instead or right side or left side respectively.

Keeping these meanings in mind, we can translate citation 2 of Sushruta Samhita-*Sharira Sthana* 4/31 as,

- The *Vrikka* (kidneys) are developed from the essence (*Prasada*) of the *Rakta* and *Meda*. *Vrishana* (testis) are developed from the essence of *Mamsa*, *Rakta*, *Kapha* and *Meda*. The *Hridaya* (heart) develops from the essence of the *Rakta* and *Kapha*. The *Dhamani* (vessels) carrying *Prana* of the body are attached to *Hridaya* (heart)
- Below heart (i.e., below = *Tasyadho*) develops *Pleeha* (spleen), in opposite or reverse direction (*Vamatah*) of heart develops lungs, at a lower level (*Daksinatah*) develops *Yakrita* (liver) and *Kloma* (pancreas)
- Hridaya* (heart) is the seat of *Chetana* especially, because of this, when it is covered with *Tama*, all living beings sleep.

For citation 3:

Keeping these meanings in view, the interpretation of the citation 3 of Sushruta Samhita *Sharira Sthana* 5/28 is as follows,

Only the bony joints are certainly very much famous (known). Joints of *Peshi*, *Snayu* and *Sira* are innumerable and certainly not possible to count.

Once again, it is clear that nothing from the *Samhita* can be taken lightly if we want it to understand in depth.

Discussion

On citation 1:

On looking at the urethra, we can find the openings of ejaculatory ducts in the urethral crest which is below and near (*Dakshine-Parshve*) the internal urethral orifice. Thus,

Acharya Sushruta seemed to convey the same knowledge, but the words he used were interpreted in literary sense, thereby developing misunderstanding and misconceptions. With this understanding, a clinician's belief in Acharya Sushruta's anatomical description about the passage of *Shukra* becomes unambiguous. This would help plan various modalities for the treatments with confidence.

On citation 2:

Acharya Sushruta in Sushruta Samhita, *Sharira Sthana* 4/31 has described the fetal development or embryology. Now, if we observe the development of lungs and the body cavities, i.e., the pericardial, pleural and peritoneal cavities, the above citation shall become more obvious [Figure 1].

The developmental anatomy as explained by Dr. Inderbir Singh along with diagrams is as follows,

From the Figure 2^[37], it will be seen that the pleural cavities are at first dorso-lateral to the pericardium, i.e., pleural cavities are in opposite direction of pericardium. So, it can be deduced that heart is developing centripetally and lungs are developing centrifugally i.e. in opposite or reverse direction of the development of heart. As the lungs increase in size, the pleural cavities extend into the mesoderm of the body wall which too is expanding at the same time and gradually come to lie lateral and to some extent ventral, to the pericardium. The pleural cavities also extend downward into the mesoderm, forming the posterior abdominal wall, and upward toward the neck.

If we observe the development of lungs in comparison to heart in the intrauterine life, it is quite clear that the lung bud and the pleural cavities are developing in reverse or opposite to the pericardial cavity i.e. it is developing *Vamatah*.

Keeping this in mind, a pediatrician can better appreciate the pathogenesis of various congenital diseases described in other places of Sushruta Samhita.

On citation 3:

Now, if we refer to few citations which are just before (Sushruta Samhita-*Sharira Sthana*, 5/26-33), the current one (Sushruta Samhita-*Sharira Sthana*, 5/28) in the same chapter, it will be clear that *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned one of the types of joint as *Mandala* and has cited few examples also, wherein no bony parts seem to be involved. Then, how can we say that Acharya Sushruta has described only those joints that are made of bone? As per the definition of a joint – *Sandhi*, their count seems to be very high, so only those types which are clinically relevant are taken into consideration and others, though it may be called a joint, are not counted due to lack of practical applicability. Keeping this in view, the observed translations seem to be unclear and absurd. Moreover, when we consider the meaning of the keywords *Kevalah* and *Parikirtita* (*Pari + Kirtitah*) as adduced earlier, the meaning of citation becomes quite relevant and clear. When a clinician who comes across a patient suffering from diseases pertaining to *Mandal Sandhis* believes it to be a joint, he/she may very well have to take into consideration the various *Dosha* and

Dhatu which naturally constitute a *Sandhi* or a joint. The natural inhabitants, like *Shleshmaka Kapha*, *Vyana Vayu*, will definitely come into picture while formulating medicine. Moreover, the blood circulation of a joint and other parts too needs to be considered before one may proceed for the various modalities of treatment.

Conclusion

From the above discussion based on semantics of various Sanskrit words used in the aforesaid axioms by *Acharya Sushruta*, it is ushered that the meaning of common Sanskrit terms such as *Vame*, *Dakshine*, *Parshve*, *Parikirtita* and *Kevala* is worth reconsidering and changing. Like here the word “*Dakshine*” should mean “southward or lower/downward or below” and not as right side, the word *Vame* should mean “opposite direction” or “reverse” instead of right side or left side, the word *Parshve* should mean “proximal” and not as either side, then the word *Parikirtita* should be considered as “very much famous (known)” and *Kevala* means “only.” This opinion seems to be hypothetical, but on applying *Tantrayukti* or semantic differentiation relating to the meanings of words, our faith does increase in Acharya Sushruta sayings, thereby dispelling the clouds of doubt and uncertainty and removing the difficulties and obstruction from our path of understanding.

Thus, on referring to these axioms of Sushruta Samhita-*Sharira Sthana*, it is quite obvious that *Acharya Sushruta* has used common words for making his treaty to be simple and appreciable. But, being simple doesn't mean easy. Unless we fathom, the real treasure from the ancient wisdom may remain obscured. Moreover, parochial paraphrasing will lead to doubts in Ayurvedic concepts. Only literary Sanskrit knowledge is not sufficient for *Vaidyas*.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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